



UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20415

Executive Registry  
77-5277

DD/A Registry  
77-4377

CHAIRMAN

July 29, 1977

PERG 77-0602

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

In his memorandum of February 25, 1977, President Carter informed us of his commitment to involve State and local government officials in the development of policies of his Administration and instructed us to make sure this commitment is fulfilled. The Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) mobility program is an excellent tool to help carry out this important commitment as well as afford agencies an effective means to assist State and local governments.

The IPA mobility program authorizes the temporary exchange of career employees between the Federal Government and State and local governments, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribal governments. In the program's first six years, over 4,000 assignments have been made. Most executive agencies have taken advantage of the mobility program to share temporarily the skills and talents of their staff with other governments and universities and to bring qualified State, local and university staff into their organizations. These temporary assignments have done much to increase cooperation and understanding in our intergovernmental system.

The IPA delegates to you and your designees the authority to enter into mobility assignments. We do require that copies of all executed assignment agreements promptly be sent to the Commission's Bureau of Intergovernmental Personnel Programs.

A key feature of the mobility program is its flexibility. Administrative procedures and requirements for bringing people on board have been kept to a bare minimum. At the same time participating employees retain their basic job rights. The mobility program can be used as an effective complement to normal career staffing programs. Assignment agreements can be arranged with relatively little lead time.

We have just begun to tap the mobility program's full potential. During the coming year, the Commission plans to take a number of steps to strengthen the quality and increase the number of assignments. The President's desire to increase the involvement of State and local officials in Federal policies and programs affecting them is an excellent reason for all of us to make greater use of the mobility program.

To achieve this planned expansion and strengthening of the mobility program, I am asking you to take three actions:

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REFERENCE

First, I urge you to inform your managers and employees of your support for the IPA mobility program. This support could be made known through a policy statement, a memorandum to key officials, or some similar vehicle. Your statement should be sent to employees in your agency who might be participating in the mobility program and to officials who will be approving or reviewing assignment agreements and requests. In addition, this policy statement should be sent to your agency's primary clientele in State and local government. Selected agencies have issued such statements in the past. If you would like copies of these statements please let me know.

Second, I am asking each of you to make sure that a key individual is serving as a coordinator for the mobility program to ensure that inquiries from State, local, and Indian tribal governments, educational institutions, and managers in your agency will receive prompt and careful consideration and appropriate action. I recognize that most of you have already identified a program coordinator. It is important, however, that persons within and outside your agency know who this person is and that this individual be able to represent the agency in arranging assignments.

Third, there is a need to initiate or strengthen the means to evaluate the progress and problems your agency has in using the IPA mobility program. The General Accounting Office has recommended to us in a February 23, 1976, report on the mobility program (B-157936) that we urge each agency to strengthen procedures to ensure that assignments meet agency priorities and fully comply with the program's basic intent. This evaluation activity can take the form of specific studies of an agency's use of the mobility program, as recently done by the Department of Housing and Urban Development or be an effort to gain the views and opinions of participants. What is important is that there be a systematic planned evaluation and review strategy.

Please send me by September 15 a copy of your statement of support for the mobility program, the name and title of the individual designated to (a) coordinate, and (b) monitor your agency's mobility program.

If the Commission can be of assistance to you in this important effort or in acquainting you or your managers with the benefits of the mobility program, please contact Norman Beckman, Director, Bureau of Intergovernmental Personnel Programs, U.S. Civil Service Commission, 1900 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20415, telephone (202) 632-6830.

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